



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Immediate Release

MUSKRATS "STEAL THE SHOW" AT SENEY WATERFOWL REFUGE

Muskrats are proving to be the most sensational immediate product of the Seney National Wildlife Refuge, a 93,000-acre area developed since 1935 as a waterfowl refuge by the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

Ducks are increasing, according to Refuge Manager Clarence S. Johnson, and the geese are coming back, but the muskrats are already so abundant that it has been possible to permit a catch of more than 10,000 during the past year.

The muskrat success was entirely unexpected. Prior to the area's present development, a large muskrat-farming effort was among the many ventures in using this area that had failed. Nationally known experts had even concluded that the Seney marshes were of such a character that muskrat farming would be impracticable.

Then the Federal Government acquired the Seney marshes and the Civilian Conservation Corps began the work of developing the area under Fish and Wildlife Service supervision so that the marshes would be a refuge in fact

as well as name. Dikes were built, pools flooded, and water levels maintained. And the muskrats began to increase, so rapidly in fact that they threatened interference with the main purpose of the refuge.

But the potential interference was handled easily, and profitably for all concerned. Local trappers were given permits to take the muskrats in a cooperative effort to reduce the muskrat population and to harvest the crop. Refuge officials supervised the program, protected the traps, and gave the trappers use of the refuge fur house. The trappers got half the pelts, and the other half were sold by the Fish and Wildlife Service for the benefit of the United States Treasury.

In the fall of 1940 and the spring of 1941 more than 10,000 pelts were taken by the share trappers. During the spring season 25 trappers earned around \$200 apiece as their share of the returns from about a month's trapping. In addition, refuge officials took 700 muskrats alive for transplanting to nearby State and private areas.

For one season at least the muskrat sideline has stolen the show at the Seney waterfowl refuge.